

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AID-05 SSO-00

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AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BOMBAY IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL MADRAS IMMEDIATE

USLO PEKING IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 8496

CINCPAC FOR POLAD PARIS PLEASE PASS TO US DELEGATION AID INDIA CONSORTIUM

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-1

TAGS: PINS, PI T, IN

SUBJ: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF MRS. GANDHI'S EMERGENCY ACTIONS

1. MRS. GANDHI HAS SURPRISED AND SHOCKED EVERYONE BUT
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HER IMMEDIATE PERSONAL ENTOURAGE BY ACTING TO DECLARE

- NEW STATE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY, ARREST VIRTUALLY

ALL MAJOR OPPOSITION LEADERS, AND MUZZLE THE PRESS. ALTHOUGH ALL HER ACTIONS THUS FAR ARE TECHNICALLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EMERGENCY PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW SHE CAN BACK AWAY FROM HER ACTIONS AND RETURN IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS WHICH HAVE MARKED THE PRECEDING 27 YEARS OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE.

2. WITH ONLY ONE OR TWO MINOR EXCEPTIONS, THE ENTIRE INDIAN CABINET, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING JAGJIVAN RAM AND Y.B. CHAVAN, ENDORSED MRS.GANDHI'S ACTION. WE ARE TOLD BY A CYNICAL BUT WELL-INFORMED "INSIDER" IN MRS. GANDHI'S KITCHEN ENTOURAGE THAT THE SENIOR CABINET MINISTERS HAD NO ALTERNATIVE AND REALIZED THIS. THOSE DISSIDENTS WITHIN CONGRESS (AND THERE WERE QUITE A FEW WHO VOICED THEIR CRITICISMS OF MRS.GANDHI IN PRIVATE) ARE NOW EXPECTED TO REMAIN SILENT. THE PM, HE BELIEVES, IS PREPARED TO USE THE FULL FORCE OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY APPARATUS TO QUELL ANY DEMONSTRATIONS OR OPPOSITION. IF ANY OPPOSITION LEADERS GO ON A HUNGER STRIKE, INFORMATION ABOUT THIS WILL BE CUT OFF COMPLETELY AND WITHOUT PUBLICITY, CALLING INTO QUESTION THE UTILITY TO THE OPPOSITION OF A HUNGER STRIKE.

3. IS THE EMERGENCY TEMPORARY OR WILL IT BE PROTRACTED? THE OFFICIAL/FOREIGN MINISTRY LINE BEING CONVEYED TO THE NEW DELHI DIPLOMATIC CORPS THIS AFTERNOON IS THAT THE EMERGENCY MUST BE RATIFIED BY THE PARLIAMENT WITHIN TWO MONTHS AND THAT IT WILL BE ENDED IN A FEW MONTHS. THIS IS POSSIBLE AND SOME OBSERVERS THINK PROBABLE IF THE SUPREME COURT VINDICATES MRS. GANDHI IN HER ELECTION CASE APPEAL. BUT MRS. GANDHI MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY PUTTING HER DEMOCRATIC IMAGE BACK INTO A BOTTLE WHICH CAN BE PLAUSIBLY MARKETING EVEN IF SHE DOES END THE EMERGENCY AND RELEASES ALL OR SOME OF THE OPPOSITION. SHE MAY BELIEVE SHE CAN CONTINUE TO FUNCTION WITH MANY OF THE EXTERNAL TRAPPINGS OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY EVEN THOUGH

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THE CONTENT MAY BE PARTIALLY HOLLOW. WITH THE OPPOSITION LEADERS IN JAIL, FOR EXAMPLE, IT WOULD BE MUCH LESS DIFFICULT TO CALL PARLIAMENT BACK INTO SESSION TO ENDORSE

HER "STATE OF EMERGENCY" AND THE ACTIONS TAKEN UNDER IT. THUS FAR, NOTHING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS DONE IS

ULTRA VIRES THE CONSTITUTION, A BROAD AND VIRTUALLY

BOTTOMLESS WELL OF AUTHORITY FOR ANYONE BOLD ENOUGH TO PLUMB IT. WITHOUT THE EMERGENCY, HOWEVER, MRS. GANDHI LOSES MANY OF HER POWERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE AUTHORIZING HER TO PUT PEOPLE IN JAIL AT WILL AND TO CONTROL THE PRESS.

4. WITH THE KEY OPPOSITION LEADERS OUT OF THE WAY, LEADERSHIP FOR ANY ORGANIZED MOVES TO RESIST MRS. GANDHI'S ACTIONS IS LACKING. THIS DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF SCATTERED AND POTENTIALLY INFLAMMATORY DEMONSTRATIONS BY STUDENTS, WORKERS, OR OTHERS. SCHOOLS REOPEN IN JULY AND THERE COULD BE TROUBLE THEN. GUJARAT MAY BE A SPECIAL PROBLEM WITH MORARJI DESAI IN JAIL AND ANTI-CONGRESS FEELING STILL RUNNING HIGH. GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER THE NEWS, HOWEVER, IT WILL WORK WITH THE GEOGRAPHIC OMPARTMENTALIZATION IN INDIA TO CONTAIN ANY TURMOIL.

5. WHY DID MRS. GANDHI MOVE NOW? FRANKLY, WE ARE NOT SURE. (A) SHE HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN DELUGED IN THE LAST WEEK WITH ADVICE FROM THOSE CLOSE TO HER TO MOVE SHARPLY AGAINST THE OPPOSITION AND TO PROTECT HER POSITION WITHIN CONGRESS AND IN THE GOVERNMENT BEFORE IT WAS UNDERMINED BY INCESSANT CRITICISM. HER LEFTIST ADVISERS, INCLUDING CONGRESS PRESIDENT BAROOAH, PROBABLY SAW PROSPECTS FOR A FURTHER EROSION OF THEIR POSITION BY THE LARGE CENTRIST-CONSERVATIVE LOBBY IN CONGRESS. WE HAVE OURSELVES HEARD INCREASING CITICISM OF MRS. GANDHI FROM USUALLY DEPENDABLE AND LOYAL CONGRESS MP'S IN THE LAST FEW DAYS. A KEY CONCERN OF THESE WAS THAT THE CONGRESS PARTY MIGHT DO BADLY IN THE NEXT ELECTION IF MRS. GANDHI CONTINUED AS ITS LEADER. SOME SOURCES SAY 60 CONGRESS MP'S WERE PREPARED TO TURN AGAINST THE PM; OTHERS CLAIM AS MANY AS 150. WHATEVER THE NUMBER, ANY REPORTS OF WEAKENING SUPPORT INSIDE HER OWN PARTY
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WOULD HAVE WORRIED THE PM GRAVELY.
GKB) THE OPPOSITION WAS BEGINNING TO RALLY ITSELF TO STRIKE AT HER THROUGH DEMONSTRATIONS IN DELHI AND ELSEWHERE. JAYAPRAKASH MARAYAN ATTACKED HER IN A BITTER AND INFLAMMATORY SPEECH AT A JUNE 25 RALLY IN NEW DELHI. HE AGAIN CALLING ON THE ARMY, POLICE AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES TO DISOBEY "ILLEGAL" ORDERS, URGED SUTDENTS TO WALK OUT OF CLASSES, TAXPAYERS TO REFUSE TO PAY TAXES, FACTORY WORKERS TO STRIKE, AND DECLARED THAT THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION SHOULD BE BARRICADED FOR ALLOWING ALL-INDIA RADIO TO "LIE" FOR MRS. GANDHI. (C) FINALLY, THERE WAS THE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE'S ISSUANCE OF A "PARTIAL" STAY ORDER FOR MRS. GANDHI ON

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C O N F I N U E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 8496

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

PARIS PLEASE PASS TO US DELEGATION AID INDIA CONSORTIUM

THE ALLAHABAD COURT CASE, AN ORDER WHICH ESSENTIALLY
DID NOT HURT THE PM BUT WHICH, WE ARE TOLD, WAS WIDELY
INTERPRETED BY THOSE AROUND MRS. GANDHI AS HIGHLY
"MISCHIEVOUS." WE BELIEVE ONE OR ALL OF THESE PROBABLY
CONTRIBUTED TO PUSHING MRS. GANDHI "OVER THE BRINK"
IN TERMS OF THE DRAMATIC ACTION THAT SHE TOOK.

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6. UNDER THESE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, AS WE SUGGESTED IN NEW DELHI 8181, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ANTICIPATE WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT. WITHOUT THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PAST AS A GUIDE, ALL THOSE WHO WATCH THE INDIAN SCENE ARE ON NEW AND UNPREDICTABLE TERRAIN. WE CONTINUE TO ANTICIPATE THAT FOREIGN POLICY, CERTAINLY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WILL NOT CHANGE MUCH, ALTHOUGH WE WILL BE WATCHING THE INDIAN BORDERS AND THE STATE OF ALERT OF THE ARMED FORCES, AS WE ARE SURE WILL INDIA'S NEIGHBORS. FOCUS OF ATTENTION WILL BE INWARD, HOWEVER, AND MRS. GANDHI WILL PROBABLY BE RESPONDING TO FOREIGN VENTURES, NOT INITIATING THEM. SHE WILL, OF COURSE, BE INTENSELY AWARE OF ALL FOREIGN COMMENTS ON THE ACTIONS SHE HAS TAKEN AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO REACT STRONGLY TO CRITICISM.

7. DOMESTICALLY AND IN THE ECONOMIC AREA, WE EXPECT THAT MRS. GANDHI WILL SOON ANNOUNCE FURTHER MEASURES TO "RELIEVE THE HARDSHIP OF VARIOUS SECTIONS, PARTICULARLY THE POOR AND VULNERABLE AND THOSE WITH FIXED INCOMES." THESE WILL BE HIGHLY VISIBLE POPULIST MEASURES IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, BUT SOME OF THOSE AROUND HER ARE ALSO URGING POPULAR ACTIONS AGAINST "BIG" BUSINESS. WHETHER IN VIEW OF THE FISCAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SOCIAL RESTRAINTS SHE WILL BE ABLE TO DO MUCH MORE THAN HERETOFORE IN IMPLEMENTING THEM IS ANOTHER QUESTION.

8. WE URGE THAT USG OFFICIALS REMAIN OFFICIALLY SILENT ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INDIAN POLITY. THIS IS A POLICY WE ARE DEVOUTLY FOLLOWING OURSELVES. WE ASSUME THERE WILL PROBABLY BE A SPATE OF UNSYMPATHETIC EDITORIALS IN THE US PRESS, BUT WE CAN WEATHER THOSE FAIRLY EASILY AS LONG AS OUR OFFICIAL STANCE IS ONE OF "NO COMMENT."
SCHNEIDER

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